

PRESS RELEASE

Congressman John Conyers, Jr.

**Fourteenth District, Michigan
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary
Dean, Congressional Black Caucus**

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CONYERS RECEIVES "JUSTICE FOR ALL" AWARD

Congressman Conyers received the "Justice for All" award from the American Association for People with Disabilities ("AAPD") for his tireless work on the election reform issue. AAPD congratulated the Congressman and thanked him for his courage and persistence in aiding the disabled community in their pursuit of equal voting rights. After thanking the members of AAPD for the award, Congressman Conyers issued the following statement:

"I have devoted my life to working to ensure civil rights for all Americans. It is my passion to ensure equal treatment for all individuals. I will continue to work with all of you to make this dream a reality. Our recent fight is in the arena of election reform. Congress must decide whether we can pass election reform legislation which ensures that no voter is left behind or not. It is my hope that Congress will pass this test, particularly with respect to voters with disabilities.

There is no question that the great majority of our citizens with disabilities cannot currently go to their local polling places and vote like everyone else. Unlike the early 1900's before the women's suffrage movement, there is no statute that excludes them from voting. Unlike the 1960's before the civil rights movement, there is no test they must pass, or tax they must pay, in order to vote. But the barriers that voters with disabilities face are more complex; they are both attitudinal in nature and physical in reality.

Congress has the opportunity and the obligation to revisit the issues of voters with disabilities in the context of comprehensive election reform. Viewed through the prism of history, the solution required is simple. Mandatory minimum accessibility standards for polling places and voting equipment. A single state official responsible for compliance. And a way for voters with disabilities to enforce their rights. Standards, accountability, enforcement -- just like in the recent omnibus education bill. It would be unconscionable to leave voters with disabilities behind by failing to enact legislation with standards, accountability and enforcement."